

which to revise and extend their remarks on the conference report to accompany H.R. 4577, making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes, and that I may include tabular and extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4577,
DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR,
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,
AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED
AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS
ACT, 2001

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the previous order of the House, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 4577) making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of today, the conference report is considered as having been read.

(For conference report and statement, see prior proceedings of the House of today.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) each will control 45 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG).

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would just briefly like to mention the fact that we have produced a four-page legal-sized document that identifies the highlights of this bill. This has been available now for more than 2 days for Members to look at to get a really good understanding of what is in the bill. I would suggest that anyone who wants to find some reason to oppose this bill, they can find it. It is a huge bill. It required hours and days and weeks of negotiation to get us to the point that we are.

Mr. Speaker, this bill should be passed today, and the House should conclude its business. I am going to ask shortly that the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. PORTER), who is the chairman of the subcommittee, manage the balance of the debate, inasmuch as he is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Resources, and Education, and Related Agencies; but before I do, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask Members to adopt this legislation and to get quickly to a vote.

I have a brief statement I would like to read before I turn this time over but before that I want to talk with the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY).

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to at this point engage the chairman of the committee in a colloquy on the Low Income Energy Assistance Program, which I hope will address the concerns many Members have regarding the lack of an advanced appropriation for fiscal year 2000 in this bill.

We are all aware of the drastic spike in price fuels that has occurred in the past year. Home heating fuels have doubled in the past year in many regions. In some areas it has increased fivefold. For many seniors and families who are struggling, that spike in energy costs have dealt a crushing blow to their family budgets just to provide the basic essentials of heating their homes.

The LIHEAP program helps over 4 million low-income households by paying on average about half their home heating bills. But due to a lack of funds, this program has been serving only about 15 percent of federally income-eligible households. The recent jump in fuel costs will mean the relative value of that assistance will be cut in half this winter.

Earlier this year, Congress provided an extra \$600 million in the LIHEAP emergency fund that was required by the President in the 2000 supplemental appropriation bill. About \$450 million of those extra dollars were released by September for this winter, and I hope that the administration will release the balance soon.

The conference agreement for fiscal year 2001 contains \$1.4 billion for LIHEAP, an increase of 27 percent, plus an additional \$300 million for the LIHEAP emergency fund. Now, normally this appropriation bill would also provide an advance appropriation for LIHEAP for the next fiscal year so that States have time to plan their programs prior to the time that funds become available. However, as the gentleman knows, due to a provision in the budget resolution which places a cap on the total for advance appropriations, we were not able to include LIHEAP funding for the next fiscal year as an advance appropriation.

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It is my hope and understanding that next year we will finish our work on the Committee on Appropriations before the fiscal year starts on October 1. But in the event that we do not, I think we need to signal our intentions to the States now so that they can be assured that LIHEAP funds will be there when they need them despite the lack of an advanced appropriation in this bill.

So I would, therefore, ask the chairman of the committee, is it your intention that we provide at least the same level of support for LIHEAP next year as is included in this bill?

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) for raising this issue because it has been a big concern for many Members on my side of the aisle as well.

I want to assure Members that LIHEAP is a very high priority for the Committee on Appropriations and we will do everything we can to maintain, at a minimum, the current level of support for this program next year.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for that response.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, let me ask further, in the event that we do not complete the Labor-H bill next year by October 1 and have to pass a continuing resolution after that date, is it your intention to include adequate funding in the first CR for LIHEAP so that States can adequately run their systems programs through the next winter heating season?

If the committee can offer that commitment, I think Members on this side of the aisle will feel much more comfortable in supporting this conference agreement knowing that the normal operations of this program will not be interrupted.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, let me respond to the gentleman that while I hope a continuing resolution would not be necessary next October, I would certainly support including funding for the full winter heating season in the first CR should we find ourselves in that position.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the committee for his strong support for the program and for his commitment to ensure that this lack of an advance appropriation in this bill will not result in the interruption of this critical assistance.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank him for the patience that he has shown as we worked our way through some very troubling difficulties. Thank goodness that they now appear to be behind us, at least for a month.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) for his comments. We have had differences throughout the appropriations process, but we were able to come together. This is a good bipartisan bill. The gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) and I spent a lot of time in the wee hours of this morning trying to bring this bill to the floor today.

Before I turn my time over to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. PORTER) who is the chairman of the subcommittee, I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, that we are at that time of the year